(e) if so, the details thereof and to what extent the industry has come out of the group?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) No, Sir. Sponge iron production has increased by about 8.8% during April-November, 2005 as compared to the corresponding period of the previous year.

(b) As.per available information, 54% of sponge iron was produced by coal based sponge iron units and 46% was produced by gas based units in 2004-05.

(c) to (e) Process of providing coal linkages to coal based sponge iron units has been restored. Besides this, captive coal blocks are also allocated to manufacturers' of sponge iron.

Expansion of VSP

3506. SHRI JESUDASU SEELAM: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have cleared the expansion plans of Vizag Steel Plant;

(b) if so, the main proposals of the plans;

(c) the amount involved in each expansion plan; and

. (d) by what time, they are likely to be completed?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): (a) to (d) Yes, Sir. The Government on 28th October, 2005 has approved the expansion plan of Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd. (RINL), Visakhapatnam Steel Plant (VSP) at an estimated revised cost of Rs. 8692 crores (base June 2005 prices) for increasing its liquid steel capacity from 3 million tonnes to 6.3 million tonnes per annum. The entire expansion plan is likely to be completed by October, 2009.